

Message Text

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PAGE 01 OECD P 04908 171821Z
ACTION EUR-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L OECD PARIS 04908

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: OECD, EGEN
SUBJECT: FINNISH QUERY RE U.S. INTENTIONS ON EAST/WEST
ECONOMIC RELATIONS TOPIC

1. FINNISH PERMREP GUSTAFSSON HAS ASKED US TO QUERY WASHINGTON ABOUT U.S. PLANS FOR HANDLING THE EAST/WEST ECONOMIC RELATIONS TOPIC AT THE OECD MINISTERIAL MEETING. GUSTAFSSON HAS RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM HELSINKI TO CONCERT WITH LIKEMINDED SWEDES AND TO INDICATE TO SECRETARIAT THAT FINNS DESIRE TO SEE EAST/WEST ISSUE DOWNPLAYED AT MINISTERIAL. GUSTAFSSON IS NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR PRECISELY WHAT THESE INSTRUCTIONS MEAN. HE SAID HE HAD POINTED OUT TO HIS GOVERNMENT THAT TOPIC HAD COME UP AT LAST YEAR'S MEETING AND THAT IT WOULD BE NATURAL FOR IT TO COME UP AGAIN THIS YEAR. GUSTAFSSON DID NOT THINK HELSINKI WAS SEEKING TO KEEP THE ITEM OFF THE MINISTERIAL AGENDA ENTIRELY, AND HE AGREED WITH US THAT MINISTERS COULD NATURALLY SAY WHAT THEY WISHED.

2. WE NOTED THAT HIS QUESTION TO US WAS QUITE
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PAGE 02 OECD P 04908 171821Z

GENERAL, AND SAID WE WERE DOUBTFUL THAT A DEFINITIVE RESPONSE COULD BE GIVEN HIM IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IT WAS VERY EARLY FOR A NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION TO BE FOCUSING ON WHAT WOULD BE DONE AT THE OECD MINISTERIAL. FURTHERMORE, THE EAST/WEST EXERCISE ITSELF HAD NOT YET CRYSTALLIZED CLEAR CONCLUSIONS. NEVERTHELESS, WE AGREED TO PUT HIS QUESTION TO WASHINGTON.

3. GUSTAFSSON SAID HE THOUGHT HIS GOVERNMENT MIGHT CONTEMPLATE A DEMARCHE IN WASHINGTON ON THIS SUBJECT, BUT HE HIMSELF BELIEVED IT WOULD BE BETTER TO KEEP THE EXCHANGES OF VIEW IN PARIS. HE ASKED THAT HIS OWN APPROACH BE REGARDED AS PURELY INFORMAL AND UNOFFICIAL AT THIS POINT.

4. COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS: WE THINK THAT GUSTAFSSON'S INSTRUCTIONS REFLECT MORE A DESIRE FOR REASSURANCE THAT THE FINNS WILL NOT BE POLITICALLY EMBARRASSED IN THIS EAST/WEST EXERCISE THAN A QUEST FOR A SPECIFIC ANSWER ON HOW PRECISELY THE MINISTERIAL WILL TREAT THIS TOPIC. WE WOULD PROPOSE TO REPEAT TO HIM THAT THE USG SEES THIS EXERCISE AS ESSENTIALLY A SYSTEMATIC EXPLORATION OF AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT SET OF ECONOMIC INTERRELATIONSHIPS. WE HAVE COME TO NO JUDGMENTS AS YET ON WHAT MAY EMERGE FROM THE WORK BY WAY OF CONCLUSIONS OR POSSIBLE IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY. BUT WE ARE AWARE OF FINLAND'S POLITICAL SENSITIVITIES AND HAVE NO DESIRE OR INTEREST TO SEE THAT COUNTRY EMBARRASSED, AND WE WILL KEEP THIS CONSIDERATION IN MIND AS WE DEVELOP OUR THINKING ABOUT HOW THE EAST/WEST TOPIC SHOULD BE HANDLED BY THE MINISTERIAL. GUIDANCE REQUESTED.
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